

“Cultural Memory in the Rituals of the Mexican Diaspora in the United States: the role of the corridos about immigration played by conjuntos nortños and the aesthetics of the bailes nortños”

Intercultural studies has devoted little attention to musical cultural expressions, particularly folkloric songs and performances. The present study will explore the role of music in shaping cultural identity through the experience of listening to, dancing, and singing corridos in the Mexican diaspora in the United States. In particular this study will explore the shared aesthetics, social roles, values, and construction of cultural narratives that are embodied in the corrido with lyrics that describe important aspects of Mexican migrant experience in the United States.

The corrido is a narrative song, often danced, composed in Spanish that recounts the historical circumstances surrounding a protagonist whose conduct may serve as a model to a community or whose history embodies the everyday experiences and values of the community (Mendoza, 1939; 1964; 1974; Hernández, 1999; Maciel & Herrera Sobek, 1998, Herrera-Sobek, 1993).

The present study will focus specifically on the uses and meanings that members of the Mexican diaspora in the United States make of the corrido. The Mexican diaspora community, as all other diasporic communities, is formed by people with a sense of agency, subject to change, resist, contribute and incorporate cultural elements of the new context where they are living and of the

contexts they left behind. This study identifies some of the hybrid cultural expressions that were incorporated in corridos and into the uses of corridos.

The Mexican population living in the United States has a diasporic character because its migration were forced by economic conditions, war, and political uncertainty, and includes many undocumented Mexican migrants. The immediate future is very uncertain. Mexican diaspora experience is complicated by the fact that Mexican migration to the United States is probably the most complex and problematic issue facing the two countries. For instance, violations of human rights directed at Mexican immigrants have been addressed by the Mexican government in various binational meetings (Maciel & Herrera-Sobek, 1998). Pressure groups that range from powerful business to civil rights organizations have played a role in determining immigration policies that affect both countries.

However, immigration to the United States is not a recent phenomenon. Mexican groups have traveled for centuries throughout the regions of Baja California, and Baja California Sur-California, Chihuahua-New Mexico-Texas, and Sonora- Arizona before the Mexico/U.S. border was established in 1848 (Pérez, 1999). Contemporary Mexican immigration to the United States is different in nature since it has been generated largely by the needs of the United States industrial expansion, and by poverty in Mexico. Mexican immigrants are not only from border areas; in fact the main contributors to the migration to the United States are the central states of Mexico (Jalisco, Michoacán, and

Guanajuato). Mexican immigration to the United States is one of the largest population movements in history (Maciel, 2000).

Mexico's diasporic culture and its multiple contributions to the economy and society of the United States have not been explored in the public arena. For the most part, Mexicans and Mexican descendants in the United States are subject to racial, linguistic, and cultural prejudices. Currently, the topics related to Mexican and Mexican descendants shown in U.S. mass media are mainly related to immigration, violence, crime, riots, and other forms of deviance, ethnic relations, and cultural differences. Although the mainstream arena denies a space to acknowledge the experiences of Mexican immigrants, they have insisted on recording their history through the main medium at their disposal: Folk songs (Herrera-Sobek, 1993). Under the continued threat of cultural erasure, Mexicans developed a diasporic aesthetic that they feel they can own, perform, share, and reshape as circumstances demand, safely, and in their own terms.

The corridos are considered in the present study as a key cultural expression to the study of the Mexican diaspora because they narrate local events related to the community. Historically, the corridos have functioned as a barometer of the people's response to social, economic, and political conditions (Herrera-Sobek, 1994). Another characteristic of the corridos that makes them a very useful cultural expression to study is that corridos play a very important role in the oral tradition of Mexican and Mexican-descent communities. Corridos are learned orally from generation to generation and although some aspects of the

corridos may change through time or vary according to geographical regions, the main content of corridos remains the same. In this way the corridos transcend space and time, and past events are transformed into present consciousness despite changes in society. The large number of corridos that describe the immigrant experience provides a unique opportunity to analyze the Mexican diaspora phenomenon. This study will attempt to analyze the formation and reconfiguration of collective memory through narrative songs, corridos.

Corridos as Part of Mexican Oral Tradition

Corridos play a very important role in the oral tradition of Mexican and Mexican-American communities. The corrido transcends space and time because although some aspects of the corridos can change through generations or may vary according to geographical regions, the main content of the corrido remains the same. Past events are transformed into present consciousness through the corrido despite changes in society. Epic corridos might be popular because the community values and folklore is normally packaged or put into a one-man (normally male) narrative. In Mexican culture, the function of the corridos is not equivalent to the newspapers that disseminate information because in order to interpret the corridos, people have to be already informed of the major important events and characteristics of the main protagonists (Hernández, 1999). The corrido is more comparable to a newspaper editorial that expresses an opinion of an event than just a news item.

Most corrido scholars agree that the antecedents of the corrido are found in the epic romancero or ballad that developed in Spain, particularly in the Andalucía region. Although the general agreement is that corridos have a Spanish legacy, there seems to be some disagreement regarding the development of the corrido in Mexico. There are three main theories that explain the development of the corrido (Paredes, 1993, cited by Lamadrid, 1997).

The Hispanophile theory was developed in New Mexico. This approach is basically founded on chronology and denies connections and interrelations with Mexico (Paredes, 1993, cited by Lamadrid, 1997).

The Diffusionist theory, Mendoza (1939), being one of the main developers of such theory, asserts that the origins of the corrido are found in Michoacan, and that they are found in Northern Mexico due to the historical migration from Southern Mexico to Northern Mexico (Paredes, 1993, cited by Lamadrid, 1997).

The third approach is regionalist. Such approach highlights the distinctive and/ or uncommon features of the region. Paredes (1958), Limón (1992) and Peña (1985), take the regionalist approach in their study of the current corrido. These authors stated that the corrido is a symbolic expression that resists economic exploitation and racial prejudice directed at Mexicans by European Americans after the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. The regionalist approach contributed greatly to the understanding of the corrido as an anti-hegemonic symbolic expression not only in the Southwestern part of the United

States but also in Mexico and in Latin America (Paredes, 1993, cited by Lamadrid, 1997).

The most prominent work illustrating this approach is Américo Paredes' (1958) book With his pistol in his hand. This work contributed greatly to the study of corridos because it provides a model of an in-depth study of the corridos that is multidisciplinary in nature. Paredes provides the historical, cultural, and the political and social context of the mid-Nineteenth Century Lower Rio Grande Valley in which the "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez" was created (Limón, 1992). Paredes' study of the corrido as a critical social discourse of hegemonic ideology influenced generations of Chicano writers (Limón, 1992).

"El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez" narrates the persecution of Cortez by the Texas Rangers (See Appendix A for the "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez"). We learn in the corrido that Cortez traded a mare to a European American and was falsely accused of horse stealing. Cortez killed a Texas Sheriff in self-defense, who in turn killed Cortez' brother and who accused Cortez and his brother of stealing horses. The corrido narrates in detail the persecussion and an escape of Cortez and the way he was forced to allow his own capture given the fact that his wife and children were imprisoned. The corrido de Gregorio Cortez provides important information regarding the early attempts to resist European American oppressive occupation in the region by defending the rights of Mexicans who stayed in the United States after the Mexican American War of 1848.

McKenna (1998) stated that the corridos that were produced after the Mexican-American War are precursors of contemporary Chicano poetry because

both are cultural forms of resistance to Euro-American hegemony. Corridos represent symbolic expression and a barometer of the Mexican Americans' response to the economic exploitation, racial and cultural discrimination and inter-ethnic conflict (Herrera-Sobek, 1993).

The Mexican-American War of 1848 produced social, political and economic conditions that propitiate the germination of social bandits who refused to accept constant violations of the civil rights of Mexicans in the new U.S. territory and who resorted to outlawry because the new legal system controlled by European Americans harmed the interests of Mexicans and increased racial tensions (Herrera-Sobek, 1993). According to Herrera-Sobek (1993), social bandits tend to be perceived by people of their communities as their champions. "El corrido de Joaquin Murrieta", a Californio social bandit (see Appendix B for "El corrido de Joaquin Murrieta") and El Corrido de Juan Cortina," a Tejano, are examples of such social bandits produced after the War (Herrera-Sobek, 1993; Acuña, 2000; Rosales, 1997; Limón, 1992).

Alemán (1998) stated that a bipolar framework in the analysis of the corridos should be avoided in order to give space to multiple experiences, cultural expressions derived from the contact of cultures that reflect the continuous process of identity construction of Mexican Americans.

Corridos About Migration

The migrant experience of Mexicans to the United States has been the chore of cultural expressions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Herrera-Sobek (1993) pointed out that the corridos represent an indicator of the political,

economic and social context of the different immigration waves of Mexicans to the United States. Corridos about immigration portray the perception of the migrant experience by migrants themselves as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Some of the dimensions incorporated in these corridos are concerned with (1) the feelings of the migrant experience, which are sometimes positive and others negative and a combination of both, (2) the economical and social contexts that force immigrants to leave their country, (3) the contributions migrants make to the U.S. and Mexican economy, and (4) personal and collective strategies to cope with the immigration experience (McKenna, 1997; Herrera-Sobek, 1993).

In her book Northward bound, Herrera-Sobek (1993) classified corridos about immigration into the following seven main thematic areas: (1) homesickness which includes topics related to loneliness and feelings of missing the migrants' relatives and loved ones; (2) border- crossing strategies. Under this topic the characters that may be involved in the corrido are: coyotes, INS officials, people who helped on their way to the United States; (3) racial and cultural discrimination that Mexican immigrants experience in the United States; (4) political issues that explain the economic and social situation that pushed migrants to leave their country; (5) love, (this topic is more prominent in corridos that depict young immigrant males who left their girlfriends or wives in Mexico and came to the United States in order to go back and marry or to provide a better economic life to a wife (6) acculturation. In corridos is a topic a fear and anxiety (corridos tend to be critical of those who deny their Mexican roots or do

not feel attachment to Mexico); and (7) death which can be part of the drama of corridos about immigration, particularly when crossing the U.S./Mexican border.

In corridos about immigration, Herrera Sobek (1996) classified corridos that specifically incorporate the Mexican-U.S. Border. Such corridos began to flourish after the Mexican-American War of 1848, consequently the two main forms of depicting the Mexican-U.S. border are (1) the border as the geographic region that politically divides Mexico and the U.S., and (2) the border as a metaphor (Herrera Sobek, 1996). In the latter representation of the border, there is an implicit response to the European American questioning of the legitimacy of Mexican presence in the U.S. by emphasizing that the Southwest was part of Mexico and also by conceptualizing the Southwest as part of the mythical land of Aztlan and the ties that have existed for centuries between Native Americans of both sides of the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande (Herrera-Sobek, 1996).

The images of the border that appear in the corrido classified by Herrera-Sobek (1996) include images (1) the promise land (these corridos mention the advantages of working in the U.S. to make money and some other positive elements of being a migrant); (2) the journey to the border (these corridos narrate in detail the preparation for the journey, description of the journey to the border itself and the arrival to the border); (3) The land of trials and tribulations; (4) rebirth and transformation; (these corridos are reflexive in nature and talk about how the immigrant has become more knowledgeable and has learnt from his migrant experience); (5) the land of the fabulous and fantastic where boundaries between the inanimate and the human are erased (the use of

zoological terms to describe clandestine activities related to border crossing such as coyote or pollero, smuggler of undocumented immigrants), (6) the anthropomorphization of the border (when the relationship with the border region is portrayed as almost social and the border has some human characteristics in this relationship, and (6) death. These corridos portray the risks that migrants face in crossing to the United States in search for work. Death is a current topic in corridos about immigration, and the sorrow that migrants' families and loved ones feel for their deaths.

I am Mexican and lived for the first 18 years of my life in various parts of Mexico, particularly Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, and the El Paso, Texas border area in and Mexico City. Afterwards, I experienced a sojourner life mainly in Europe and the United States. During the course of the present study, the present researcher was continuously crossing from being an insider, to being an outsider, in the communities of study in the present exploration of the meanings of corridos and their performances. There were many commonalities between the participants and the present researcher, such as speaking the same languages, having similar cultural memory, having the experience of living outside one's original country, being perceived as the "other" due to skin color, cultural background and "Mexican" accent.

However, some participants were initially suspicious of the present study because in the immigration experience, historically Mexicans have been, and continue to be, the main target of anti-immigrant efforts by the United States government as well as by people practicing open racism. I was viewed by certain

of her respondents as a potential outsider who could be part of the institutionalized system that so often misrepresent the experiences of such marginalized groups. I built trust, assuring participants that their words and ideas were going to be treated in the most delicate way possible, and that their representation was going to be as accurately conveyed as possible.

I am both an outsider and an insider to the United States academic arena. I have commonalities with other intercultural communication research scholars, who study the same social phenomena, having scholarly conversations in English, writing and presenting our work in English, and having common knowledge of scholarly literature in the area of study. At other times, I am an outsider to the United States academe because I do not have strong linguistic, historical, social, and cultural connections with it, and also because I am a female researcher of color in a predominantly European-American space where there is a strong tendency to privilege the voices of males.

Personal Interviews

From December, 2000 to May 2001, the present researcher conducted personal interviews with radio executives, recording producers, musicians, singers, and frequent dancers and listeners of corridos in Chihuahua, Chihuahua; Satevó, Chihuahua; Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua; El Paso, Texas; Dumas, Texas; and, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

During the winter of 2000, 13 Mexican immigrants who live permanently in the United States and who visit their family at least once a year, usually during the Christmas period, were interviewed while they were in Chihuahua,

Chihuahua; Satevó, Chihuahua; and on the ranches nearby Chihuahua, Chihuahua. These Mexican immigrants are frequent listeners and dancers of corridos sung by conjuntos nortños. Three conjuntos nortños that play in Chihuahua, Chihuahua and towns nearby Chihuahua City were interviewed. Two conjuntos nortños that play in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and one that plays in Dumas, Texas, were interviewed. Two radio executives from Chihuahua, Chihuahua; two from Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, one from El Paso, Texas and three from Albuquerque, New Mexico were interviewed. Two promoters of dances featuring corridos performed by conjuntos nortños in Albuquerque, New Mexico and one in Chihuahua, Chihuahua were interviewed.

The total number of personal interviews was 40. Most participants were interviewed twice, using information from previous participants to elicit clarification and deeper responses upon re-interview. Personal interviews allowed the present researcher to gather common cultural understandings related to the corrido, immigration, corridos about immigration, and performance and aesthetics of the corrido. All interviews carried out in the State of Chihuahua with Mexican migrants who were visiting their hometown during Christmas holidays were conducted in the migrants' homes, in many cases with most of their family members present. Interviews with conjunto nortño musicians were conducted before, or after, their performance except in two cases. Interviews with radio executives were conducted in their workplace, and interviews with two musicians and composers from New Mexico were carried out at their homes.

I attempted to privilege the voice of Mexican immigrants themselves in order to explore the different ways in which they negotiate their migrant experience in the United States in their everyday life, and how they continually remake, reconstruct, reconstitute and renew their cultural identity through such corridos sung by conjuntos nortños.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

AND THE INTERVIEWS.

“Now more than ever, migration is a very present phenomenon. South Americans and Caribbeans are experiencing the same problems we Mexicans have in the United States, but they are experiencing them in other parts of the world like Spain, France, Germany, Italy and other parts of Europe. They are not welcome, they are being mistreated, and they have to deal with anti-immigrant laws.... Migrants face the same problems everywhere. This means that we not only sing for la raza [Mexicans and/or Mexican descendents], but also means that other immigrants face the same struggles we do, so our songs are also meaningful to them. Some walls have fallen and others walls have been erected.” (Jorge Hernández leader of “Los Tigres del Norte,” personal interview, 2001).

The corrido has been perceived by most participants of the present study as providing analysis of political, social and economical conditions of people. All participants of this study demonstrated a high degree of understanding of the main components of the corrido, its role, aesthetics and history. Corridos enjoy a high degree of credibility among people. None of the participants doubted the veracity of the corridos. People often referred to the corrido as an instrument that not only analyzes important events of the community but also incorporates the feelings of the characters and the people of such events. In this sense, the epic element of the corrido, is complemented by its lyric element. The corrido is

also perceived as an expression that is always present in moments of transformation and crisis at the individual and collective level.

All participants learned corridos from a very early age and although some of those participants from the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, tended to listen more to ballads, rock in Spanish and other music genres, all dance corridos the in family and community gatherings. All participants portrayed the corrido as an instrument for the preservation of the community's memory and values.

Regarding differences in perceptions about corridos, it seemed that the more educated and individuals higher income tended to have a purist position towards the corrido. For them the true corridos are the ones that were created during the Mexican Revolution and before. According to them, current corridos lack the “good” qualities of the old corridos, such as voicing the concerns of the people and being concerned with social problems. Participants who listened and performed current corridos did not see the transformation of the corridos as a problem. Their position reflected a concern to try to understand such changes rather than condemning them.

Among the changes that people perceived were the topics and the length of the corridos. According to musicians and people who listen often to corridos, such changes are directly related to the changes in society, since corridos narrate events that happen in society. One of the topics that has been popular in the corridos is narcotraffic. The reactions towards narcocorridos were contradictory and ambiguous. Some people tended to see the main characters of

the narcocorridos as similar to social bandits because they were seen as transgressors of the existing class system of Mexico. They explained in great detail the reasons why poor people are pushed to be engaged in narcotraffic activities. Other people thought that narcocorridos glorified delinquency, and that the production and distribution of such music should be prohibited. Such comments were derived particularly from radio stations and from middle-class participants who tended to see narcotraffic as a problem limited to criminals. In general, participants who were against narcocorridos were more vocal than those who perceived drug smuggling phenomenon as part of the reality of the United States and Mexico. Perhaps the latter participants were less assertive because they implicitly acknowledged the negative elements of narcotraffic.

The reasons for the popularity of the corridos that were mentioned in the focus groups interviews as well as in the personal interviews, were the resonance they have with the community, their ability to narrate a story in a very clear and short manner using the vocabulary of the region, and the moral message of the narration.

Regarding corridos about immigration, migrant and non-migrant participants perceived this genre as an important mean to express migrants' experiences in the United States. One of the most salient characteristics was the music's propensity to portray feelings of pessimism and sadness. Migrants often expressed the similarity of their own experiences with those portrayed in the corridos.

In general, non-migrant participants with higher formal education and income tended to express more eloquently their perceptions, positions and attitudes towards the phenomenon of Mexican migration to the United States. Migrants who were interviewed in Mexico talked in less detail about their migrant experience than those who were interviewed in the United States. Perhaps, because participants conversed with the present researcher in the presence of their relatives in Mexico, they preferred not to share their hardships in the United States. These migrants are a source of moral and economic support, as well as of pride, to their families. Another reason for not expressing their concerns, experiences and positions so eloquently (as the other groups did) was that, in many instances, their experiences can be quite traumatic, personal and intimate.

Their present researcher is not part of the intimate personal circle to which migrants can fully trust and feel completely safe to talk and to be understood. In most instances, being silent or talking about the subject was a matter of preserving their dignity. Migrants had to continuously negotiate across multiple social contradictions that included the coexistence of marginalization with survival and love for their families. Although the present researcher tried to conduct the interviews in a manner that was as pleasant and considerate as possible to participants, the questions were externally imposed on them. This study, overall, is not formulated in the terms of the participants, as they define, configure and empower themselves.

All migrant participants are low-waged workers who clean yards, serve food, sew clothes, harvest, plant, drive, manufacture fibre-glass, take care of

other people's children, construct houses, milk cows, and in general provide all the services that make life of those who reject them and marginalize them comfortable. During the personal interviews and the focus groups interviews, migrants expressed multiple subjectivities that make their migrant experience transcend the dimension of workers: Those subjectivities of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, neighbors, workers, religious people, members of their homeland in Mexico, marginalized and at the same empowered people both in Mexico and in the United States. Migrants demonstrated a highly complex social network in attempting to be autonomous and unaffected by the dominant culture. They counterbalanced the lack of assistance, acceptance and fair treatment from both countries. Such social networks, or communities, generates distinctive experiences and values that accept, reinforce and transmit the elements of their migrant experiences as well as the culture they prefer to keep, create or incorporate in their everyday lives.

The corrido is described by migrants as symbolic representation of their collective migrant experiences, of their cultural memory that evoke the repressive forces impinging upon the migrant communities. The corrido becomes a transgressive cultural form where the narrations of individuals of the community is transcended by the resonance they have on the collective.

Performance of conjuntos nortños, Dance And Aesthetics: interviews With Musicians, Frequent Dancers, Radio Stations Ceos And Djs, And Promoters.

"It is not what you play, but what you play for ...not about music or lyrics but about feelings. You have to have make people feel it... I like to see that people

are happy and that they enjoy my music. It is obvious that I love music... In the case of norteño music, the blend of music and culture cannot be separated.” (Leandro Rodríguez, musician and fisherman from the conjunto norteño “Los Campeones del Valle,” from Zaragoza, Chihuahua, personal interview, December, 2000).

Musicians of norteño music are cultural and social actors that recreate and co-created the community for which they are singing. All musicians are part of the communities for which they play and so the interaction between musicians and their audiences tends to be dialogical, both elements are in a continuous intimate conversation when dancers make requests for songs, when musicians send dedicatorias and greetings, when they share the same rural and working-class identity, and often the migrant identity in the case of musicians who perform in the United States.

Musicians’ knowledge is part of the oral tradition that is enriching and consolidating during their transnational performances. The voices of the norteño musicians seem to evoke the rural life of their homeland and the desires, dreams and fantasies of people from rural northern Mexico. Such voices also reconfigure the spaces inhabited by Mexicans in the United States or in Mexico, in rural areas or in cities. Musicians, like most working class migrants, also overcome multiple obstacles to assert their culture. Musicians also embody the physical and spiritual dimensions of cultural survival.

Dancers are also an important part of the dynamics of the musical production and performance that in some senses reflect the social norms and in others push the boundaries of such norms. According to Dallal (2000, p. 239) “in general, there is no dance without militancy. This process is as old as the myth,

the linguistic code, the rites and religion. Once they are ready to perform certain dances, the young people from the community will be the owners of the choreographic secret received by the eldest and those youngsters in turn will transmit it to the new generations.” The norteño music dance is taught informally, it is part of the embodied knowledge of the community in which the old generation teaches the new ones. Most participants learnt to dance because their parents taught them and they dance with them at home and in public places. In many senses the private places where people learn to dance are not so different from the public ones. There seems to be a coherent continuum in which everyday movements express people’s ideas, feelings, sensations, and views of the world. Such continuum is developed in people’s specific social contexts and reflected in the way people move their bodies. In dances that are performed in the community, body’s dancistic movements reflect body movements that are carried out in people’s everyday life. The steps of norteño music dance are a part of the process of elaboration through which the dance is a stereotyped act of the movements and gestures that are carried out in the everyday life of the community. That might explain why norteño dance takes a symbolic dimension for people because they reflect their everyday life in their homeland.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the present study was to explore the role of the corridos about migration in shaping cultural identity through the experience of listening,

dancing and singing within the context of the Mexican diaspora in the United States. In particular this study attempted to explore the shared aesthetics, social roles, values and construction of cultural narratives that are embodied in corridos about migration.

The perspective used to analyze the uses and meanings that members of the Mexican diaspora in the United States make of the corrido and the aesthetics of the performance corridos is a critical approach. The research in cultural studies, postcolonial theory, Chicano studies and ethnomusicology provided the framework through which important identity construction processes were analyzed in part of the Mexican diaspora in the US.

The data gathering included (1) 40 personal interviews with radio executives, recording producers, musicians, singers, and frequent dancers and listeners of corridos in Chihuahua, Chihuahua; Satevó, Chihuahua; Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua; El Paso, Texas; Dumas, Texas; and, Albuquerque, New Mexico. (2) Participant observation in the daily activities of members of the community and observation of the daily lives of participants of this study as well as of their festivities and dances and some of the dance halls Mexican migrants attend to in the United States (3) Five focus groups interviews were conducted at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua; two focus groups interviews were conducted in Chihuahua, Chihuahua; two focus groups interviews were organized in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and, two in Dumas, Texas. The total number of participants in the focus groups was 71. (4) Narrative

analysis of 15 selected corridos about immigration sung by conjuntos nortños chosen by participants of this study.

The findings from different data-sets are compiled in the present section to address each of the research questions posed in the present study. Participants in the focus groups and interviews considered the corridos as a key cultural expression of Mexican culture. All participants demonstrated a thoughtful and well-conceived understanding of the main characteristics of the corrido. Current as well as of old corridos enjoy high credibility among all participants, regardless of participants' education, class, gender and geographical region in Mexico and the United States, including those who expressed their dislike for present day corridos. Participants often referred to the corridors as one of the few means in which they can have trust on the content of the events narrated by them. One major role of the corrido is to offer social, political and economic analysis of the context of the narrated event of the corrido. In doing so, it responds, in people's terms, to people's interests and points of view of events that are important to people. The corridors are perceived as narrative that privileges the social and moral values of the community and which therefore, has the capacity to transcend time and space because the moral of the corridor is timeless and applies to all kind of people willing to listen to lessons of everyday life.

The epic dimension of the corrido is particularly meaningful to people who listen to, and dance, corridos. In this regard, some heroes in the corridos are social transgressors whose values and way of life are in line with those of the people. The individual characteristics of the corridos' main characters often

create social consciousness because such feature have a powerful resonance with the community from which such characters are. The individual stories portrayed in the corridos are transcended by the collective perception and resonance of the corrido. Individual stories are transformed into communities' stories due to the similarity of the social, economic, and political conditions of both the community and the individuals. The role of the corridos is to inform about events important to the community, but more importantly to offer an editorial, a place of analysis of events worth of keeping in the collective memory and also a place to record the feelings that emerged in such events. The corridos are powerful to the people because they integrate the subjective and objective elements.

Participants expressed that the corridos are a fundamental element of the oral tradition of Mexican and Mexican-descendent communities because they are learned orally from generation to generation. A proof of this oral tradition is the fact that all participants knew by heart a large number of corridos related to the Mexican Revolution as well as to many current events.

Participants mentioned the capacity of the corridos to transform past events into present consciousness because many of the current corridos are a contemporary version of old ones or portray the same problematic that the community experienced in the past.

Corridos are a very important cultural element that connects people with their communities because they were often referred to as being a fundamental part of family gatherings and community gatherings.

Part of the migrant identity of Mexicans portrayed in the corridos is the expansion, shifting, erasure or transgression of political boundaries. Corridos about immigration cover and narrate spaces that are covered, passed through, occupied temporarily, and permanently, by Mexican migrants. Such places are more linked to the migratory routes passed by Mexican than to static nation-state boundaries.

The very “wetback” identity means the transformation of Mexican nationals into “illegals,” one of the undesirable outcasts of the United States society. The border christens Mexicans who cross the Rio Bravo as “wetbacks.” The identity of the wetback is present in most corridos about immigration (“The rich wetback,” “The tomb of the wetback,” “The other Mexico,” “Three times wetback.”) and it is transformed from being a source of shame, as the mainstream societies from both Mexico and the United States have always ascribed to poor Mexican migrants, into being a human and dignified identity that becomes a source of celebration, ethnic pride, a self-centered definition of hard work and hope

The corridos about immigration portray a holistic perspective of the Mexican immigration experience in the United States that humanizes, celebrates and denounces migrants’ everyday challenges, adversities and experiences.

Corridos about immigration gives account of the complexity of the migration experience which is never unilateral, smooth, continuous but rather contradictory, ambiguous, and always changing. The corridos about the migrant

experience of Mexican often portray the debate and conflicting gains and losses of migrating.

Immigrants reaffirm their ethnic identity on the basis of their homeland culture and life experiences, not only through ethnic practices, such as certain celebrations, food, religious beliefs, but also through memories of their lived experiences in their country.

Corridos provide ample opportunities to Mexican migrants to symbolically re-experience the relationships they have with their homeland, their relatives, and their loved ones. The cultural archive of the Mexican diaspora is continuously co-created and preserved orally, through stories, often embodied in corridos, as well as through the body, that is, through dance performance, musical performance, clothing, food, and through ways of interacting with members of the migrant community. In the case of norteño music dance, the cultural archive is constituted by a corpus of songs and corridos, ways of playing norteño music, ways of dancing and organizing dances. These cultural specificities are passed down, orally and informally, by the old generations to the new ones.

The performance of corridos sung by conjuntos nortños represents multiple negotiations between of the cultural capital of Mexican migrants and the cultural capital of the United States. Corridos about immigration constantly mention places of the United States, and relationships with other members of a broader diaspora as well as with members of the host culture. The performance of corridos by conjuntos nortños has embraced sophisticated musical and

recording equipment from the United States mainstream society as well as ways of getting the music diffused and promoted.

Historically, Mexican migrants in the United States, as well as other migrants from Third World countries, have been confronted with racism, ethnicism, xenophobia, marginalization and terrorism. Mexican migrants negotiate in multiple ways their migrant condition in the United States in the face of racist, nativism. Some of their negotiation mechanisms include: the creation of informal, but highly complex and strong, social networks that work as a safety net and cushion in times of economic, family and social crises.

The performance of conjunto norteoños is often evaluated based on the interaction musicians have with the community they play for and not only by the artistic qualities of the musicians. Knowledge about the members of the community, their lifestyles, their major events and the songs that are liked the most by a particular community are crucial for the success of conjunto norteoño in situ performance.